

teachers have attempted to train their pupils to give such reasons as an integral part of their answers. Though simple parsing, such as is done by Standard III., is all that is required of Standard IV., many teachers still require their pupils to give the detailed parsing of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns. To this in itself there is no great objection, except that it gratuitously adds to the already heavy work prescribed for this standard, and makes it all the more difficult to enter on the elementary study of sentence-structure that is so important for the composition of this class. The two highest standards made for the most part a satisfactory appearance in this subject, and in a few schools they did well.

As was the case last year, a great many failures have been recorded in geography. I do not think that the kind of questions set accounts for this. There can be little doubt that the subject is taught in a very formal and mechanical spirit, and that the lessons fail to interest and attract the pupils. It is, however, a difficult subject to handle well, and the unavoidable shortness of the time that can be given to it in a majority of the schools robs the lessons of much of the interest that a fuller treatment would arouse. In the lower classes the teaching at the map is often unsatisfactory and inefficient, and questions are dealt with as if the text-book or certain tabular extracts in the text-book had been learned by rote and the map hardly ever looked at. Many of the questions given have been designed to test map-knowledge and encourage map-study. The following is the sort of thing that betrays the neglect of careful study of maps: Pupils can tell readily enough what and where Madrid is, but they seldom have any idea of the part of the country in which it is situated. In like manner they can give the position of St. Petersburg or Kilimanjaro (a mountain specially mentioned in the work prescribed for Standard III., for what reason I cannot divine), but they can rarely tell what sea is nearest St. Petersburg, or what ocean is nearest Kilimanjaro. Any intelligent use of the map in teaching these places should readily enable children to answer such questions as those just referred to. Much of the inferior answering in this subject is due to the poor quality of the answers with which teachers are satisfied in the written examinations they give their pupils from time to time. The exercise-books of most schools afford abundant evidence of this. Physical geography is still poorly known.

The only other subject of instruction to which reference need be made is singing. I cannot understand why this is so generally neglected. One can inspect schools week after week and never hear a note, except during the half-hour usually given to formal instruction in this art. I should like to see the singing of a verse or two of some inspiring song form part of the routine of every morning's and every afternoon's work, and the special singing-lessons looked forward to as hours of happiness and enjoyment. In only one of the schools that I have seen has a teacher made it a practice to get the pupils to sing while marching into the schoolroom. The introduction of a larger amount of singing into the routine of work should act as a valuable mental tonic, cheering and refreshing both heart and head, and lending a zest and stimulus to the lessons that follow. If taken up with heartiness and enthusiasm, it would make school-life and school-work much more pleasant and enjoyable than they usually are. In large infant departments singing is of special value, and here, happily, it is less neglected.

Though a teacher's certificate is supposed to guarantee his ability to teach singing, very many certificated teachers cannot teach a note. It would be a great improvement if the Minister could be induced to institute a special examination in singing, and to issue a special certificate to all who are really qualified to teach it efficiently. I think the Board might well approach the Minister with a proposal of this kind, and use its great influence to forward a change so necessary and so beneficial. If similar special certificates could be issued for special knowledge of drawing, agricultural science, general science, domestic economy, and botany, the teaching of these subjects would benefit very greatly.

The low tone in which pupils are allowed to speak and to answer causes, in a number of schools, a considerable loss of time and no small sacrifice of efficiency. This fault is more prevalent than it should be.

Considerable pains has been taken throughout the year to train pupils to give full answers stated in the form of sentences. The results, though often bald enough, give promise of substantial progress in this direction. Teachers, however, do not sufficiently recognise that the kind of answer a pupil will give depends very largely on the kind of question he has to answer. Full and complete answers are chiefly to be encouraged by giving, as occasion offers, questions of rather wide scope—comprehensive questions that will naturally crave in reply a connected statement of several particulars. The more such questions predominate, the better will be the training in oral composition that will be given. The repetition of the bulk of a question in stating the answer to it gives, indeed, a full answer, but it is not always desirable.

As a body, the teachers in the Board's service with whom I have come into contact give every attention to their duties. They are in a high degree punctual, courteous, considerate, and patient. Not a few show great skill in their work, while many throw great enthusiasm into it and inspire their pupils with a good working spirit. The female teachers are especially distinguished by their diligence and fidelity. A few teachers have struck me as being lazy and indifferent about their work, but this is a very unusual experience. Many who succeed but indifferently labour for success with a zeal that deserves it. These great and positive merits are in considerable measure counteracted by failings which have been sufficiently dwelt on in this and last year's report.

The examination for the standard pass in Standards I. and II. has now been in the hands of head teachers for two years. In my judgment, and in that of my colleagues, this arrangement has not conduced to a high standard of efficiency in these classes. The pupils who are passed deserve to pass, but the bare pass-level is little overpassed. In reading and arithmetic the advances made would be more thorough and rapid if the examination were still in the hands of the Inspectors. Of this I can entertain no doubt.